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For Immediate Release

Judicial Nominating Commission releases names of nominees to fill vacant Circuit Court judgeship in Kenton County

FRANKFORT, Ky., Aug. 11, 2006 — The Judicial Nominating Commission, led by Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert, met yesterday at the Kenton County Justice Center in Covington to choose nominees to replace Circuit Judge Douglas M. Stephens, who retired effective June 30, 2006. This position serves Division 2 of the 16th Judicial Circuit, which consists of Kenton County. Three attorneys were named as nominees to fill this vacancy: Roger N. Braden, James R. Kruer and Daniel J. Zalla.

Attorney Roger N. Braden. Braden currently practices with Sutton, Hicks, Lucas, Grayson & Braden in Edgewood. For the past 21 years, his general practice has focused on plaintiff and defense law, personal injury cases and medical malpractice. He holds a bachelor's degree from Northern Kentucky University and a juris doctor from Salmon P. Chase College of Law. Braden resides in Taylor Mill.

Attorney James R. Kruer. Kruer currently practices with Adams, Stepner, Woltermann & Dusing, PLLC in Covington. His practice is in family law, personal injury and mediation. Kruer holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Xavier University in Cincinnati and a juris doctor from Salmon P. Chase College of Law. Kruer resides in Edgewood.

Attorney Daniel J. Zalla. Zalla currently practices with Kaufman, Johnson & Blau in Newport. His practice consist of contract law, divorce and family law, real estate law, probate, personal injury and business litigation. Zalla holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky and a juris doctor from Salmon P. Chase College of Law.

Kentucky Constitution Addresses Judicial Vacancies

Section 118 of the Constitution of Kentucky imposes on the Governor the duty of appointing an interim judge when a judicial vacancy occurs. Section 118 also mandates that it is the responsibility of the Chief Justice to convene and preside over meetings of a Judicial Nominating Commission to select three qualified applicants from which the Governor must appoint. For

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circuit judges and district judges, the nominating commissions are local and the members selected from within the judicial circuit or district. A statewide nominating commission is convened to fill vacancies on the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court.

Judicial Nominating Commission Process

When a judicial vacancy occurs, the executive secretary of the Judicial Nominating Commission sends a notice of vacancy to all attorneys in the judicial circuit or the judicial district affected. Attorneys can recommend someone or nominate themselves. Once that occurs, the individuals interested in the position return a questionnaire to the Office of Chief Justice. The Chief Justice then meets with the Judicial Nominating Commission to choose three nominees. The names of the applicants are not released. However, once the Judicial Nominating Commission has determined the names of the three finalists to be sent to the governor for selection, the Judicial Branch makes the names available to the public and the media. The credentials of these three nominees are sent to Gov. Ernie Fletcher for review. When the governor appoints the replacement, his office makes the announcement.

Circuit Court

Circuit Court is the court of general jurisdiction which hears civil matters involving more than \$4,000, capital offenses and felonies, divorces, adoptions, termination of parental rights, land dispute title cases and contested probate cases. Family Court is a division of Circuit Court.

The Administrative Office of the Courts is the operational arm of the Kentucky Court of Justice and supports the activities of more than 3,500 court system employees, including the elected offices of justices, judges and circuit court clerks. The AOC provides training and education to the state's judges.

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